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Embodied and Embodiary Leadership: Experiential Learning in Dance and Leadership Education

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Abstract

Arts-based learning activities are gaining popularity and acceptance within leadership programmes around the globe. While dance as a learning method is still emerging as a practice within leadership education, we argue that dance-making can open up new possibilities and understandings for organizational management. More than simply using dance as a metaphor, the concepts of embodiary and embodied leadership explore how the moving body can be a key site for individual and collective creative realizations and communications.

Following a grounded theory approach, within this article we draw on the perspectives of dance academics, artists and leadership academics engaged in arts-based learning. Through reviews of Leadership and Dance Studies literature and qualitative, semi-structured interviews, we identify key themes related to how and why dance is being used within leadership education. These themes prompt critical reflections on the use of dance as an experiential learning method to enhance creativity and communication within organizational contexts.

Keywords: Leadership; dance; embodied; experiential; education; creativity; communication.

Embodied and Embodiary Leadership: Experiential Learning in Dance and Leadership Education

“Leaders must encourage their organizations to dance to forms of music yet to be heard”. – Warren Bennis (2010)

Bennis’ aspirational call to innovative, collective activity provides a clear example of what we introduce here as an *embodiary* action. Like a visionary action, an embodiary action suggests that transformational possibilities can be sensed before they can be verbally articulated. Sight has dominated such sensual descriptions of speculative-thinking within the English language, with terms such as foresight, far-sighted, envisage and visionary. But how might kinesthetic activity similarly prompt and share embodied revelations? And how might experiences of movement in leadership education lead to new creative realizations and enhanced communication between leaders and followers?

Following Merleau Ponty (1962), within this article we explore how blending our tactile and visual senses through dance may prompt embodied revelations to allow new organizational paradigms and strategies to emerge and be understood. Moreover, we explore how *becoming* embodiary (again, like *becoming* visionary) is a disposition that can be enhanced within the specific context of experiential learning in leadership education.

This notion of creative discovery helps contrast the concept of *embodiary* leadership from *embodied* leadership. While embodied leadership suggests that individuals can physically sense and express the present and physically carry knowledge from the past (Hujala et al., this issue; Küpers, 2013; Ladkin, 2008; Ladkin and Taylor, 2010a; Matzdorf and Sen, this issue; Ropo, Parviainen and Koivunen, 2002; Ropo, Sauer and Salovaara, 2013; Satama, this issue), we suggest embodiary leadership as a new term entwined with the idea of a creative disposition: it reflects how individuals can *physically* imagine an organizational future (to contrast with envisioning and visually imaging the future). This employs Gardner’s (1993) concept of multiple intelligences by valuing how kinesthetic intelligence in particular may prompt revelations and epiphanies.

So how can leadership become both embodied and embodiary, and how can embodied and embodiary leadership be taught?

We read Bennis’ quote above as more than simply a metaphor. Instead, we read it as a nudge towards the growing field of educational theory that recognizes the arts (Darsø, 2005; Grisoni, 2012; Guillet de Monthoux, 2004; Scherdin and Zander, 2011; Shiuma, 2011; Springborg, 2012; Springborg and Sutherland, this issue), and the moving body in particular, as a location for both realizing *and* communicating new ideas (Bassetti, 2014; Blom and Chaplin, 2000; Bresler, 2004; Gardner, 1993; Powell and Gifford, this issue; Robinson, 1982, 2011). Within leadership literature, the importance of artistic revelation, and its capacity to challenge dominant organizational paradigms, has led to the widely celebrated claim that the MFA is the new MBA (Pink, 2004). While this suggestion may seem far-fetched, it has stimulated reflections on how arts-based learning may enhance postgraduate leadership programmes (Adler, 2006; Bozic and Olsson, 2013; Ladkin, 2011).

Ground coffee and grounded theory

This research emerged from the professional journeys and research intersections of the authors. Two of us had performance careers as dancers and subsequently segued into academia, investigating creativity in dance learning (Rowe and Zeitner, 2011) and the applied

use of dance learning in diverse contexts (Rowe, 2003). Our third author has been involved in scholarship in leadership education (Jackson and Parry, 2011). Through our collegial and congenial conversations over coffee on campus, we began to map out areas of common interest. These caffeinated discussions prompted our fascination into how dance as an experiential learning method has been speculated on, rationalized, applied and reflected on, within formal and informal education focused on leadership (Cammock, 2003; Denhardt and Denhardt, 2006; Ludevig, this issue; Ropo and Sauer, 2008).

Following a grounded theory approach (Glaser and Straus, 1967), our research subsequently began to examine the discourse in the academic fields of Dance Studies, Leadership Studies and Education, to allow cross-disciplinary characteristics to emerge. This led to a deeper curiosity about how educational practices in dance may assist learners within leadership and organizational settings. Our research thus became guided by the exploratory queries:

- *Why should* dance be applied within leadership learning?
- *How has* dance been applied within leadership learning?

Pursuing gaps in the literature, our research then engaged in semi-structured qualitative interviews (Wengraf, 2001) with 16 artists and scholars of Dance Studies and Leadership Studies with professional or academic expertise in leadership learning or the applied use of dance learning. Situated in Asia, Australia, North America and Europe, the selection criteria was limited to participants working within learning environments that are predominantly informed by Western academic discourses. While our aim was to explore current global trends in the applied use of the arts and dance in leadership education, we acknowledge the limitations in this regard.

The interviews nevertheless allowed us to identify salient practices and co-construct theories that reveal diverse understandings and experiences of leadership, and the experiential learning methods employing the arts within this context. By constructing and re-constructing information based on the collected research literature and qualitative interviews (Bryman and Bell, 2007; Corbin and Strauss, 2008; Denzin and Lincoln, 2007; Marshall and Rossman, 2006), we reveal existing practices and theoretical speculation on the applicability of dance in contemporary leadership education.

Reconstructing this research journey within this article, we first explore discussions on dance, leadership and experiential learning within academic discourse. We then consider how our interviewees provide learning experiences in (what we term) *embodiment leadership* and embodied leadership. This leads into considerations of potential future directions for research in this field. Such research might subsequently consolidate the idea that “dancing to music that has yet to be heard” is not simply a indirect metaphor for leadership, but an increasingly effective direct educational and organizational practice.

Scholarship on dance, leadership and learning

The nexus of Dance Studies and Leadership Studies becomes more apparent when both are historically situated within broader socio-political trends. In the 1930s-40s, leadership theories sought to distinguish the traits of non-leaders/followers from the inherent “personal qualities and characteristics of leaders” (Jackson and Parry, 2008, p. 23). Such theories could find parallels in dominant Western scholarship on dance at the time, which sought to capture the creative instincts of particular dance artists (Jordan and Grau, 1996). These “trait” theories of leadership and creative expression supported specific Modernist political, economic and artistic agendas of the era. As the historical and cultural limitations of the described traits became more apparent, subsequent research shifted leadership and dance scholarship

towards analyses of how particular dance and leadership behaviors and approaches might be identified and enhanced in more diverse contexts.

New leadership emerged as a research area in the later 20th Century, critically exploring varied processes of leadership (Avolio, 2005; Bass and Bass, 2008; Burns, 1978; Bryman et al., 2011). The extension of dance across school curricula at the same time moved research into dance beyond an emphasis on particular historical exemplars, and towards a more actively engaged exploration of diverse approaches to dance-making (H'Doubler, 1957; Humphrey, 1959; Laban, 1948, 1996; Redfern, 1982; Schwartz, 1993; Smith-Autard, 2002). Both dance and leadership studies extended their focus beyond simply trying to identify who has leader/artist characteristics and why, towards analyzing the diversity and efficacy of leadership/artistic practices.

Within contemporary leadership theory, the influential concepts of transformational and transactional leadership (Ashkanasy and Tse, 2000; Avolio and Yammarino, 2002; Bass and Avolio, 1990; Burns, 1978, 2003; Dvir et al., 2002; Tichy and Devanna, 1986; Yukl, 2006) provide frameworks within which to explore how leaders and followers communicate and interact, both verbally and through the moving body. Transformational leadership explores how organizations engage in processes of directed change, allowing new, shared practices and concepts of identity to emerge. Transactional leadership explores how organizations retain stakeholder engagement to consolidate and sustain shared practices and concepts of identity. While both require effective verbal and bodily communication and collaboration among leaders and followers, it might be argued that transformational leadership can require greater collective participation in creative processes. It might further be argued that increasing globalization and technological innovation has fostered a dynamic socio-political and economic environment, one in which organizations are continuously required to undergo transformation.

The unpredictability of this leadership environment can challenge traditional logical approaches to organizational problem solving (Weick, 2007), prompting individuals and organizations to move beyond habitual rationales. Modes of expression and problem-solving approaches can therefore be considered essential to leadership. Such an "enactment of personal potential" may further be seen as crucial to self-actualization, and therefore also an essential component of transactional leadership. Leadership scholarship has therefore increasingly considered how the arts may be applied to support explorations into creative ways of thinking and being within organizations (Adler, 2006; Antal, 2012; Austin and Devin, 2003, 2010; Bathurst, Jackson and Statler, 2010; Ropo and Sauer, 2008).

This scholarly interest in the nexus between the arts and leadership might also be considered in research into aesthetic, authentic and charismatic leadership, which generally explores how the roles, responsibilities and perception of a leader might be consolidated through the leader's mastery of particular arts practices (Gardner and Avolio, 1998; Grint 2000; Hansen et al., 2007; Taylor and Ladkin, 2009; Taylor and Hansen, 2005). While this remains a worthy zone of research, our focus here is on the ways in which the arts may be used to stimulate organization-wide engagement with leadership, and the creation of creative organizational climates. Following Bennis' quotation at the start of this article, we are interested in how leaders can imbue organizations with a motivated engagement in transformation, towards organizational goals that are continuously emergent. We are further interested in how experiences of creating and performing dance can prompt students of leadership towards this creative disposition.

Such an instrumentalist use of arts practices within diverse learning contexts has been promoted by global agencies such as UNESCO (UNESCO 2006; 2011; 2013). This is in

recognition of the cognitive, personal and social value of arts-based learning. While dance has traditionally been on the periphery of academic discourses into applied arts-learning, the applied use of dance has been increasingly researched in diverse learning environments, from formal learning institutions to more informal community-based settings (Best, 1978; Green Gilbert, 2006; Haynes, 1987; Kirk et al., 2006; Laws, 2002; Preston-Dunlop, 1980, Rowe, 2015). This research has revealed the ways in which creative realizations can emerge from embodied knowledge, or become socially constructed through kinesthetic experiences.

The embodied activity known in English as dance and dancing has diverse cultural meanings and processes (Kaeppler, 1976, 1999). Of particular interest to our research here, scholarship on choreography (or dance-making) provides a focus on creative, organizational activities that are centered in the moving body. Choreography can involve cyclical processes of conceptualizing, improvising, rehearsing and performing movement (Blom and Chaplin, 2000; Burrows, 2010; Butterworth, 2004; Lavender and Predock Linnel, 2001). While each of these processes can be guided by very specific cultural expectations (Nahachewsky, 1995; Puri and Hart Johnson, 1995; Sklar, 2001; Williams, 1991), we argue that an embodied sense can pervade the choreographic process: that is, the felt experience of movement can guide the way new ideas emerge. In this process, the specific form or genre of dance is irrelevant, as discovering, exploring and engaging the moving body can manifest in myriad artistic styles.

As dance is largely a social art form (involving the co-ordination of multiple performers and creative contributors), differing cultural expectations can also guide the organizational relationships amongst the performers and creators of a dance. Exploring the diversity of these organizational schemas, Butterworth's (2004) Process Continuum Model identifies various ways that leadership can function within the choreographic process. Identified as a "Didactic to Democratic Spectrum", these modes include:

- *Choreographer as expert (leader) – dancer(s) as instrument (follower(s))*. The creative ideas are all generated and determined by the choreographer, and the dancer is expected to maintain fidelity to the choreographer's directions.
- *Choreographer as author - dancer as interpreter*. The creative ideas are generated by the choreographer, but the dancer may creatively interpret these in the moment of performance in order to keep performance fresh.
- *Choreographer as pilot - dancer as contributor*. The creative ideas are prompted and selected by the choreographer, but the dancer may suggest creative ideas during the choreographic process.
- *Choreographer as facilitator - dancer as creator*. Creative ideas emerge from the dancer, under the guidance and construction of the choreographer.
- *Choreographer as collaborator - dancer as co-owner*. The creative ideas are co-constructed and the final creative product co-owned by dancers/choreographers.

This spectrum extends from a leader-centered method of dance-making to a practice of shared leadership (Pearce and Conger, 2003). Diverse dance-making processes, regardless of genre or cultural context, might be considered through the lens of these choreographic organizational models. These models can also provide a framework for the potential transference of meaning to other, non-dance related contexts of collective, innovative activity. For example, the experience of co-constructing a dance in the non-hierarchical creative environment of the *choreographer as collaborator - dancer as co-owner* model might provide learners with insights into cooperative action and teamwork, which can then be transferred into other organizational contexts, such as organizational change management.

As Ladkin and Taylor (2010b) suggest, one of the key functions of arts-based learning within leadership programmes is to provide such transformative experiential learning moments.

Such experiential learning provides participants with an opportunity to engage in an activity (Dewey, 2009; Kolb, 1984; Piaget, 1973), and then reflectively construct new, shared meanings (Vyogtsky, 1978). These activities can prompt a passage through conceptual thresholds (Land et al., 2008), challenging a student's previous, firmly held assumptions about leadership, organizational management and cooperative creativity. Such threshold concept learning focuses on the development of student dispositions, rather than the student's absorption of particular facts and theories related to the subject area. This is based on the premise that if a student becomes *disposed* towards a particular concept, their learning in that area will become self-motivated, critically reflective and sustained independently (Perkins, 2008).

From our research, such experiential learning appears to be the dominant pedagogical method employed when applying arts to leadership learning. While there were some instances in which a more theoretical liberal arts model had been employed (presenting art history/appreciation theories to future leaders in order to make them "well-rounded" individuals), the more practice-based approaches of experiential learning appeared more aligned with our interest in the teaching of embodied and embodied leadership.

Creative revelation and enhanced communication: Embodied and embodied dispositions

The popularity of arts-based learning in leadership appears to be increasing within formal degree programmes in business schools and more informal training workshops within organizations. While dance remains on the periphery of these art-based learning approaches, our research sought to gain a more solid understanding of how the moving body may expand understandings of leadership and allow new meanings to emerge. We therefore focused on the areas of bodily communication and interaction, as well as improving creativity through problem-solving.

To gain these understandings, we sought the voices of leading dance artists, teachers and academics applying dance in different learning contexts, and leadership academics who are exploring the use of arts-based learning. At this stage, we could find relatively few instances of the use of dance in leadership programmes around the world. Our semi-structured qualitative interview process thus sought to elicit speculations on the value of dance in leadership learning, and, in contexts where dance had been used as a learning tool for leadership, to prompt critical reflections.

The processes of applying dance and arts in leadership contexts were generally described in the terms of their own disciplinary discourse amongst dance and leadership specialists. Our cross-disciplinary research therefore also involved an unpacking of dance and leadership languages in order to identify points of alignment and areas of shared concern. This analysis (summarized in our literature review above) highlighted the nexus between dance and leadership, and guided the interview process to allow ideas from dance and leadership experts to be expressed in ways that may effectively transcend disciplinary borders.

From our research, two key themes emerged as salient to the use of dance in leadership education: creative revelations and enhanced communication. The embodied creativity discussed here might be considered in terms of Craft's (2002) definitions of "big and little c" creativity (p. 51), in which big C creativity describes creative ideas that are new ideas to the world, and little c creativity describing creative ideas that are new ideas to the creators. This distinction is important as it relieves those engaged in creative tasks from a pressure to manifest a creative product that is totally original, and allows them to focus instead on creative acts that are personally revelatory.

Dance also clearly offers opportunities to advance understandings of embodied leadership. In terms of communication, an enhanced understanding of body language has been argued as valuable to leadership (Awamleh and Gardner, 1999; Grint, 2000; Holladay and Coombs, 1994; Ladkin, 2011). An engagement with dance may go beyond simply an awareness of body language, however, as through co-operative dance activities, diverse modes of communication and collaboration can emerge (Burrows, 2010; Butterworth, 2004; Rowe, 2015). Our interviewees emphasized the ways in which dance creation and learning can enhance such collaboration and communication in order to extend leadership practices.

Embodying creative revelation

The moving body is a site for discovery. In our discussion Susan Koff, Clinical Associate Professor of Dance Education at New York University, explains how dance is “a holistic experience” that can allow for active learning in any educational context. To challenge the passive learning of traditional classroom environments, Koff suggests,

Through dance though people can learn and embody different types of movement. With their body they can explore and feel what differentiates a hurricane from a typhoon or just basic light wind. They can explore and embody the collision of molecules in sort of chaotic forms. That is a very experiential way of learning, through doing this with their bodies.

Within the context of leadership, through dance and the moving body individuals can kinesthetically experience what transformation or authenticity feels like. While Koff refers here to the more personal revelations associated with little c creativity, these creative experiences can be seen as transferable. Peter Lovatt, Head of the University of Hertfordshire’s Dance Psychology Lab, researches and teaches dance-based workshops for corporations and business schools in the UK. In our conversation he explained how the creative act of dance improvisation can support divergent thinking within problem-solving scenarios. He said,

We know that when people engage in improvised dance, or in other words, unplanned dance, that this has a positive impact on their problem-solving abilities. In certain ways it makes them more creative. When people engage in structured dance, such as a dance where we teach them what to do and they consequently know what they are doing next, then it speeds up a cognitive process in another way.

Peter Lovatt’s experiments revealed how untrained dancers engaging in improvisational dance tasks subsequently performed better at divergent thinking tasks, whereas those engaged in replicating specific dance steps were better at convergent thinking tasks. This would seem to suggest that engaging in creative movement tasks can open up “possibility thinking” (Craft, 2002, p. 111), which can be directly transferred to other tasks. These findings suggest that creativity can be encouraged through problem-solving in dance-making processes, such as dance improvisation.

Applying the notion of choreography, our interviewees further emphasized the importance of engaging in an act of creativity that results in a particular artifact in dance workshops. As Robby Barnett, one of the founding directors of Pilobolus Dance Company, proposed, “You have to produce something to be creative. A good idea is not worth anything unless it is given some form.” Barnett’s Pilobolus dance workshops have been taught within graduate programmes, such as the Wharton School of Business and as executive training within

corporations. Their aim is to foster understandings of leadership by using a creative dance workshop model. Barnett explains,

Pilobolus is about making things collectively and solving problems collectively. A Pilobolus workshop has basically three sections. It involves a warm up, improvisational challenges, which then lead to composition. We have our own set of exercises.

We always begin with an opening circle and end a workshop with a closing circle. That is to get together and reflect on what we are doing. We then do a walking warm up that we call Streets of New York. Then we move on to improvisation. At the end of the improvisation stage we take the ideas that emerged as response to challenges and use these as seeds of the piece that we then create. What happens in the studio is really a process of play, problem-solving and improvisation.

Overall it is really about dance and making dances, and what are people going to do within their group. It is about making shapes, moving through the space and relying on each other at challenges. Then there is a long period of negotiating particular problems of a piece and finding solutions to those problems.

It is within the performative presentation of such artifacts that creative actions may lead to greater meaning-making. As Barbara Snook, who has authored dance textbooks for primary and secondary school curricula, suggests,

If all we did was little exercises and never look at each other, we would never learn anything. We would not grow as people. We learn from others and can respond to others. Performing for others takes the learning to a whole new level. It is like communicating yourself to other people. People are usually blown away by how much they learn through performing for others.

These comments suggest that the act of performing choreographic work that learners created themselves can lead to greater self-awareness. Moreover, through creating and performing dance, people can learn how they communicate themselves, and how others express themselves through their moving bodies. Such revelations can be related to understanding diverse aspects of communication in leadership (Knapp and Hall, 2009; Manusov and Patterson, 2006; Stanton, 2004).

Keith Grint, Professor of Public Leadership at the University of Warwick, suggests that the creation of an artifact can be relatively meaningless for students, however, as "they quite often assume that it was just a bit of fun, a bit of light heartedness." The extension of the creative action into constructive meaning-making might therefore be considered an essential aspect of arts-based learning in leadership education. As Donna Ladkin, Professor of Leadership and Ethics at the Cranfield School of Management, suggests "the other thing with creating an artifact is that you can then look at it, which allows you to reflect. You can see things that you didn't know before. It can be an anchor point for reflection."

As suggested in Barnett's example of a Pilobolus workshop, the composition of a creative artifact, in the form of a choreographed dance, provides the learners with an object to reflect on within "the closing circle". Barnett contends that in a leadership or corporate context "people argue about ideas" such as consumer products or consumer services ideas, "there is no way of objectively or empirically deciding on an idea in the abstract [...] You can only do that when you see something."

The creation of an artifact may further be valued as a motivator for creative action. As British choreographer and corporate dance pedagogue Royston Maldoom suggests,

I found that it is very important to have that thing at the end. It also enables me to put pressure on myself and pressure on the participants. If things slow down in a workshop, for example, I can say "you know guys, in an hour or in a weeks time you will be in front of the other group or in front of your friends and family or whatever, and you are going to be showing this." That keeps us on the ball.

The shifts and changes in responsibilities regarding the dance-making process in Maldoom's and Pilobolus's workshops can be used to draw parallels to leadership and organizational behavior. While the focus is on creating choreography that can be performed at the end of a workshop, the actual artifact (product) only serves as a point of reflection on the learning process. The learning process itself contains transformative, authentic, charismatic, self- and shared leadership dimensions. That is, the way individuals communicate and interact, as well as their ability to solve problems and communicate their ideas, verbally and nonverbal, directly influences the outcome of such process. This may not be important from an artistic perspective, as it may not achieve big C Creativity and the production of highly innovative dance works. The value of such creative dance experiences within Leadership Education can be recognized, however, through the transferability of a creative disposition towards other organizational challenges.

Identifying the value of engaging in creative processes beyond big C Creativity can require some articulation. Volker Eisenach, artistic director of Faster than Light Dance Company, develops dance projects with diverse communities, including corporations. He concurs that it is "important to have a performance at the end" to reveal the creative journey, although more for reasons of enhancing the solidarity of members of the participating group. He explained,

It is important to provide a goal at the end of a project or workshop series. If you would not have a performance at the end, people would lose their focus. The performance is a place where people can apply what they have learned and get immediate feedback from the audience. It is especially good when the audience includes their peers, since this gives people a chance to present themselves in a completely new light. It is like re-starting the relationship between them. Often people say "I didn't think that this person can do that" or "I didn't think that I can do that."

Ralph Buck, Head of Dance Studies at the University of Auckland, describes the importance of not simply focusing on the final creative artifact in such workshops. He suggests,

People like making things and showing things. The key thing that I emphasize is that it is the journey as much as the arrival. The focus is on the process and the product equally.

Again, the dance-making process in Eisenach's and Buck's view provide the opportunity to learn about leadership through critically reflecting on what people felt and kinesthetically experienced through dance and the moving body.

Neal Ashkanasy, Professor of Management at the University of Queensland, considers the problems that can emerge with dance as a learning method in leadership education when there is no clear creative process or final creative product to reflect on. He describes,

a course that used Tango to explore leadership [...] It was all about who is taking the leading role and where the shifts in taking the leading role are. The only learning we actually achieved was learning the actual Tango steps, though maybe that had to do with the red wine.

Ashkanasy went on to explain that the process of learning took up most of the time, which left little time to critically analyze and reflect how the learning about the shifts in the leadership role during a Tango can be applied in different leadership scenarios. This would seem to emphasize that when a dance workshop relies more on content-knowledge absorption, rather than creative contribution, the capacity of the students to make meaning from the learning experience can be diminished.

So how might creative dance tasks enhance leadership understandings? Our interviewees appear to support the idea that creative dance tasks can open up learning spaces, allowing new ideas and understandings to be revealed. The transference of such revelations from a dance to a leadership context can be greatly enhanced however, through the development of dance artifacts that focus reflective discussions on the creative processes that have been undertaken. Such discussions may allow for the social construction and articulation of new meanings amongst participants; concepts that can effectively transcend the context of a dance workshop and advance leadership within an organization. These experiential learning moments can thus construct portals past dominant conceptual thresholds amongst students of leadership. Once passed, leadership students may feel more disposed towards an engagement in embodied leadership. This leads to queries as to how dance might support the more fluid communication of new ideas within an organization.

Embodying communication

Tracey Camilleri, programme director of The Oxford Strategic Leadership Programme at Saïd Business School, University of Oxford, emphasizes the importance of nonverbal communication, suggesting "you can't teach leadership education and ignore the body." Keith Grint concurs, explaining that nonverbal communication

... is hugely important. I quite often see figures about that 70% of communication is behavior rather than content. People always quote the same piece of research that is from years ago and I am not sure, [but] clearly there is something very important about this [...] I use video cameras to film people while simulating negotiations. I stop the camera every three to four minutes and ask them what they were trying to achieve there [...] Sometimes people are really shocked when they see on video what they were saying. But they learn a lot through that, especially their physical behaviour. I don't think they are very aware of it. Analysing the footage is a good way of learning about how they used their body in the process, like leaning forward or the way they are looking at others.

Such exercises may be valuable for analyzing whether people use their moving bodies in a charismatic or authentic manner (aligned to their words), for example. Such exercises may also serve to question how people use their moving body to transform group behavior to achieve an anticipated outcome. Grint's emphasis in these exercises is to reflect on individual kinesthetic experiences and behavior in leadership settings.

Brigid Carroll, Senior Lecturer in Leadership and Organisation Studies at the University of Auckland, agrees with the importance of drawing awareness to physical communication, emphasizing that "there is a notion of being present to what's in the room or what's happening with others that I think is really critical in leadership." Analyzing bodily actions and

reactions can therefore be beneficial to understanding leadership after the physical experience of an exercise, such as engaging learners in role-play.

In generating learning about communication in leadership, Richard Hall, Professor of Work and Organisational Studies at the University of Sydney, seeks to use diverse art experiences to “highlight the importance of body language in the sense of how we hold and present ourselves”. Neal Ashkanasy prompts awareness of nonverbal communication in human interaction with students through role-play, as “emotions are largely reflected through nonverbal communication. This is hugely important in leadership [and] most people are hopeless at picking up perceptions or emotions.” As the previous comments suggest, dance is an art form that can help learners to discover and explore their emotions and perceptions through the creative process of dance-making.

Taking her students to art galleries is one way Stephanie Burrridge, Adjunct Lecturer at Singapore Management University, tries to improve her student’s observation skills regarding human communication. Burrridge explained that “the articulation through the body, and the body as a language, is quite fascinating for students.” The analysis of moving bodies helps Burrridge to illustrate to students the importance of the nonverbal in communication.

To Susan Koff, “nonverbal communication is at the heart of what we do” in dance and in life. Peter Lovatt elaborates this saying,

Even if we do nothing we are communicating through our movements. That indicates why dance is important. We almost have a dance instinct. We are instinctively driven to dance by our chemical make-up, which is phenomenal. That is one form of communication. That is implicit communication [...] If people are not comfortable in their bodies and not comfortable moving their bodies, even walking around the office, for instance, they could be sending out all kinds of signals, not being able to signal their intent through their body signals naturally.

Body language thus presents a steady stream of information that is constantly being expressed within our daily lives and in organizational contexts. Expanding on this idea, Barbara Snook suggests,

... through movement we are expressing who we are and our life experience. It might not be knowledge like a mathematical equation, but what we are physically expressing is who we are at the core of our being.

Sometimes it can take a guided experience, however, to reveal deeper layers of these embodied expressions. Describing the impact of how such deeper layers of body language are expressed within Pilobolus executive training workshops, Robbie Barnett explains,

In dance you can see something deep and real about a person that is probably invisible in all the rest of their lives. You can sit with someone in the office for twenty years and not know something about them that is visible in thirty seconds when they dance. Something that means something about who they are, something much more instinctual and part of their fundamental nature than the way they pretend that they are through their dress or their speech.

While drawing attention to how our bodies communicate can be very valuable, dance as an experiential learning method might also prompt new ways of expressing and receiving body language. Becoming more aware of both the signals being sent from our own bodies, and the signals being sent from other bodies, can require deep reflection.

Andrea Haring, lecturer at Columbia University School of the Arts, works with her students on “freeing up their minds and bodies” through movement and voice exercises. Haring suggests that “a freer body and mind allows people to relate to other people and express themselves from different points of view as opposed to an everyday point of view.” She explained the “everyday point of view” involves people telling themselves “don’t do this, don’t do that, watch out, don’t rock the boat too hard.” In line with Haring’s thoughts, Royston Maldoom suggests that dance is effective within leadership workshops because there is a

... growing awareness of the role that the body can play in changing perceptions and the way we view ourselves [...] There is also a release of emotions and the opportunity to speak in a language that is not word based or not literacy based.

Sometimes, these new ways of seeing and perceiving body language are stimulated by a more tactile approach to dance. Ralph Buck explains how touch within dance can be central in shifting perceptions of self and others. Reflecting on his workshops within retirement homes and hospitals, he emphasizes that

... sometimes it is just the act of touching someone else. Some people say “nobody has touched me for twenty years”. Then you put them in a dance position with a partner then they feel happy. It makes them feel good about themselves. That is a big thing for some people. Touch, happiness, rhythms, laughter, all that stuff gets them to connect with themselves and others. The point is to create situations where there is touch, rhythm and happiness and with dance you can do that.

Robby Barnett concurs with the importance of haptic approaches to dance as a means of prompting participants into more meaningful, communicative interactions. Pilobolus workshop tasks therefore involve exploring how

... people touch each other, because it provides a physical springboard for experimentation and tension release [...] When you touch somebody you can also see how they feel about you. There is this emotional and psychological aspect that comes with touching people. Because of our particular work, which is movement, and because we are a collaborative company, we find each other in each other’s arms rather frequently. Our work is very much connected with people touching each other. In today’s world it is rare that you actually get to touch a stranger. We shake hands, but the process of going from stranger to non-stranger to friend, whatever that means in this world, is an intriguing thing. We find that we are able to bring people into a situation where a certain form of intimacy or physical comfort can be established. That allows people to approach ideas more openly.

The process of becoming an embodied leader might thus involve a greater sensual awareness of the people in a group and their kinesthetic impact on each other. Such sensual awareness is not difficult to awaken, as Barbara Snook suggests, “everybody has embodied knowledge. A lot of people are just not aware of it because they never think about it. When people do dance workshops they become aware of that and it surprises them” how much they know about nonverbal communication, but never think about in real life. Ann Cunliffe, Professor of Organization Studies at Leeds University, explains how this

sense-making is [...] a sensory process. A lot of what we do is process things through our senses. For example, looking at people and sensing that they are with you or not. I can realize that by looking in peoples’ face and look at their physical actions. You can also tell by the enthusiasm in their voice. That is something that

we can sense. Sometimes that is very responsive. When you work in an organization you use your senses in working with others by feelings and through observations. You often hear leaders say that it is a gut reaction. Others say that they sense that there is something wrong with you. You might not be able to say what that sense is, but you just feel it. So it is important for leaders to be aware of it. We can make people aware of it by bringing peoples' attention to it. I don't think there is a technique to get people attuned to it. But you can say to people to be open to their senses and intuition in conversations.

When exploring this notion of "making sense" through movement tasks within dance workshops, Ralph Buck further explains,

I tell them to listen to their intuition, to listen what feels right. Inbuilt in this statement is to get them to experiment with different forms and to pick one that feels the best, or the one that their peers think looks best, or one that answers the question that you posed at the beginning best. What I mean by exploring what it feels like, I mean what it feels like in regard to energy levels, different use of space, and attitude and emotional input. When we talk about different options they always say "that feels a lot better".

This sensual response of saying that "it feels a lot better" subsequently becomes a prompt for a reflexive discussion with the group, following the task. This raises an issue that is particularly pertinent to teaching embodied leadership. While the experiential, communicative tasks provided by dance may open up the senses and a process of "sense-making", the realizations gained from this may remain within the studio if they are not extended to a further process of "meaning-making". This can require group discussions designed to reflectively construct new meanings from kinesthetic experiences. It is through such group meaning-making discussions that the sense-making personal experiences from dance may extend into leadership discourses and practices inside and outside of organizations.

Non-verbal communication might therefore be considered a pressing concern for teachers of leadership in diverse international contexts. This can involve first drawing attention to how much is currently being shared through body language. Subsequent explorations of new ways of physically communicating might then liberate individuals to more effectively express and receive information with and through their bodies. Dance workshops can provide a safe playground in which to make such explorations, as participants can play with both visual and tactile cues. The subsequent shared process of re-constructing the experience through group dialogues can help shift the learning from personally "making-sense", to collectively "making-meaning". This meaning-making may then provide a clearer way of transferring learnt concepts from just a dance context into a leadership context.

Stimulating such new ways of physically perceiving, expressing and understanding ideas is central to the development of cooperative group action within the Pilobolus workshops, as Barnett elaborates, "Increasingly there has been a sense that these workshops can lay bare some of the essential features of effective cooperation." Getting groups to work effectively together through kinesthetic tasks can thus be crucial to embodied leadership.

Conclusion

Futuristic science fiction films, whether depicting utopias or dystopias, are almost universally disappointing in their portrayal of human physicality. Set in the most imaginative of architectural designs, the mundanity of pedestrian movement prevails; the films generally depict people moving about and interacting with their bodies in stifled ways that parallel 20th

century workplace physicality. Given the significant organizational, technological and intellectual leaps we are making as a global society, might not an infinitely more complex, prehensile, hyper-physicality imbue our social interaction in the future? Are we imagining ourselves into a state of complacent, compliant immobility?

Bennis' quote at the start of this article presents what we consider to be a rallying call for more imaginative ways of collectivizing our physical selves. The moving body provides clear opportunities for collaborative, innovative and expressive ways of organizing people in transformative action. Allowing these opportunities to emerge can require danced educational experiences that reveal and consolidate effective leadership practices.

Our research indicates that there is a growing interest around the world for instilling such experiences within leadership training programmes. While still nascent and developing its own language, discovering, exploring, debating and applying embodied and embodied leadership qualities is nevertheless gaining firm footholds in different parts of the world. Motivated by a desire to enhance organizational creativity and communication, dance-based learning will inevitably spin, twist and slide its way further into leadership education.

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